

**NMFS Requests Comments on Notice of Intent to Prepare
Amendment 2 to the HMS Fishery Management Plan
and
Amendment 2 to the Billfish Fishery Management Plan**

NMFS announces its intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and conduct rulemaking, as needed, as part of a comprehensive review of the Highly Migratory Species Fishery Management Plan (HMS FMP) and a five year review of essential fish habitat for the Atlantic Billfish FMP. The original HMS FMP and Amendment 1 to the Atlantic Billfish FMP were published in 1999 and several issues need to be addressed including, but not limited to:

Atlantic Bluefin Tuna Quota Allocations
Swordfish Quota Allocations
Shark Quota Allocations
HMS Limited Access Permit Program
HMS Essential Fish Habitat Five Year Review
Exempted Fishing and Scientific Research Permit Program

NOAA Fisheries is reconsidering HMS quota allocations among and between domestic commercial and recreational categories and subcategories. NOAA Fisheries is requesting comments over the next 120 days on options and other issues for consideration in the EIS for this rulemaking. After collecting public comment and further analyzing the issues, NOAA Fisheries will prepare and publish an Issue and Options paper for additional public comment and review. Scoping meetings will also be scheduled at that time.

This FAX notice is a courtesy to HMS Fisheries interests to keep you informed about your fishery. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For further information, contact either Karyl Brewster-Geisz, 301-713-2347, Mark Murray-Brown at 978-281-9260, or Russ Dunn at 727-570-5447.

Bruce C. Morehead
for John H. Dunnigan
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

July 9, 2003
Date